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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0744
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7115
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 7436
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5478
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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3221
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4749
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3651
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: NEPAL: NEW ARMY CHIEF STRESSES HUMAN RIGHTS

¶1. (U) In his first address since being sworn in as Chief of the Army Staff, General Chhatra Man Singh Gurung stressed that the Nepal Army would have "zero tolerance" for human rights violations. Speaking before more than 1,000 generals, officers, and non-commissioned officers at Nepal Army Headquarters in Kathmandu on September 10, Gurung added that the "character of commanders" would be reviewed before making assignments. He would "maintain the Nepal Army's apolitical character and support for the government in the constitution drafting and peace process."

¶2. (SBU) Gurung announced a renewed emphasis on army professionalism, civilian supremacy, civil-military relations, decentralization of command, accountability, coordination with other security forces, and non-combat roles for the Army. The forthcoming year would be a "year of training," promising more support for joint training programs and physical training resources. According to army officers attending the talk, Gurung's discussion of day-to-day issues of concern to the Nepal Army was a welcome change to his predecessor's focus on vague concepts such as "sovereignty" and "national integrity."

¶3. (SBU) Comment: General Gurung's strong emphasis on human rights during his first public remarks is a positive sign and marks a shift from the tenure of General Katawal. Post will continue to seek opportunities to press Gurung on key human rights, impunity, and civil-military issues. End Comment.
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